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09/990,625	11/20/2001	Scott Montgomery	268/263	3428
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ORRICK, HERRINGTON & SUTCLIFFE, LLP IP PROSECUTION DEPARTMENT 4 PARK PLAZA SUITE 1600 IRVINE, CA 92614-2558			ROBINSON BOYCE, AKIBA K	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3639	
DATE MAILED: 12/14/2005				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/990,625	MONTGOMERY ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit	
Akiba K. Robinson-Boyce	3639	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 November 2001.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-47 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-47 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) 1 is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 11/20/01.

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____ .

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

6) Other: ____ .

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

1. Due to communications filed 11/20/01, the following is a non-final first office action. Claims 1-47 are pending in this application and have been examined on the merits. Claims 1-47 are rejected as follows.

Claim Objections

2. Claim 1 is objected to because of the following informalities: The preamble of this claim discloses "A method of refunding postage". However the body of the claim does not actually disclose refunding postage. The body of the claim recites "storing information for a postage transaction in a database...", "receiving a postage refund inquiry", and "retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the postage refund inquiry". However these steps only lead up to the step of refunding postage, but do not actually refund the postage. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-6, 8-10, and 28 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sansone (US 6,547,136).

As per claim 1, Sansone discloses:

storing information for a postage transaction in a database, the postage transaction information comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual returned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code);

receiving a postage refund inquiry, (Col. 6, lines 20-24, buyer contact return processing); and

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the postage refund inquiry, (Col. 6, lines 28-32, calculations are then made from the use data base, Sansone does not directly disclose "retrieving", however it is obvious that this postal transaction information must be retrieved from the use data base in order to make appropriate calculations).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for a tracking ID to have an associated delivery status with the motivation of identifying what the status of tracked postage is, and to retrieve information from a database with the motivation of conducting further processing of information for the postage being tracked.

As per claim 2, Sansone discloses:

Art Unit: 3639

refunding the postage based on the retrieved postage transaction information, (col. 6, lines 42-47, buyer will receive a refund).

As per claim 3, Sansone discloses:

displaying the postage transaction information, (Col. 7, lines 38-44, display results of postage calculations).

As per claim 4, Sansone discloses:

receiving confirmatory delivery status information associated with the tracking ID, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes); and

updating the delivery status in the database with the confirmatory delivery status, (col. 6, lines 36-40 discloses that upon return, label 49 is associated with label 251, and information on label 49 is scanned/stored in the database, and since delivery confirmation label 254 is affixed to the label 251 [or to label 49 upon a return], one can conclude that information on delivery confirmation label 254 is also scanned and stored in the database, meaning every time there is a return, the delivery confirmation is updated in the database when it is scanned).

As per claim 5, Sansone discloses:

wherein the postage transaction information further comprises a postage transaction date, (Col. 4, line 18, data included with the postal indicia).

As per claim 6, Sansone discloses:

wherein the postage transaction information further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight).

As per claims 8, 9, Sansone discloses:

wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an account administrator/ wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an end user, (Col. 6, lines 20-24, buyer contact return processing, shows both buyer and return processing is involved in the refund inquiry, where returns processing represents the account administrator and the buyer represents the end user);

As per claim 10, Sansone discloses:

wherein the postage is refunded based on the delivery status contained within the retrieved postage transaction information, (Col. 6, lines 42-47, buyer receives refund if the information in the code matches the information in the database).

As per claim 28, Sansone discloses:

a database, (Col. 5, lines 55-58, data base);

... when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for receiving confirmatory delivery status information from a master tracking computer system, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes);

and

... when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, the database management module further configured for updating the delivery status with the confirmatory delivery status information, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual retuned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code, also, col. 4, lines 55-59 shows date included in the encrypted version of the unique number).

Sansone does not specifically disclose data processing circuitry, a communications module or a database management module, but these features are inherent with Sansone since Sansone does disclose a computer environment in col. 5, lines 41-43, therefore making it obvious to include data processing circuitry, a communications module and a database management module.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to include data processing circuitry, a communications module or a database management module with the motivation of incorporating hardware and software that is commonly included and necessary in a computing environment that handles processing of information, communicating information and utilizing databases in the environment.

Art Unit: 3639

5. Claims 7, 11-27, 30-47 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sansone (US 6,547,136), and further in view of Whitehouse (US 6,005,945).

As per claims 7, 18, 34, 39, Sansone does not specifically disclose wherein the confirmation delivery status information is received from a postal authority, but does disclose that the label of a Merchandise Return Label includes the name of the post office that issued the permit number for returning a package.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

wherein the confirmation delivery status information is received from a postal authority, (Col. 7, lines 40-42, shows postal authority). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the postal authority is in charge of validating all postal information).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for confirmation delivery status information to be received for a postal authority for the purpose of showing that the postal authority has control over all postal transactions including delivery confirmation.

As per claim 11, Sansone does not specifically disclose wherein the postage is refunded only if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has not been delivered, but does disclose issuing a refund for returned goods in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

wherein the postage is refunded only if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has not been delivered, (Col. 25, lines 5-18,

Art Unit: 3639

if never received, the postal service would issue a refund). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the postal service issues refunds for postage indicia that was unused.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to refund a postage only if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has not been delivered with the motivation of issuing a refund for undelivered mail, and thus unused postage.

As per claims 12/14, 22, Sansone does not specifically disclose wherein the postage is not refunded if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered/wherein the postage is not refunded, but does disclose issuing a refund for returned goods in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

wherein the postage is not refunded if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered/wherein the postage is not refunded, (Col. 25, lines 5-18, shows that a process is carried out to ensure that the postal service would not issue a refund for a postage indicia that was previously used). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the postal service does not issue refunds for postage indicia that was previously used.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention not to refund a postage if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered/wherein the

Art Unit: 3639

postage is not refunded with the motivation of not issuing a refund for delivered mail, and thus used postage.

As per claims 13, 21, 27, 42, Sansone discloses:

applying the tracking ID to a mail piece, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, delivery confirmation 254 affixed to label 251, which is affixed to the package upon return);

reading the tracking ID on the mail piece, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes], and scanned); and

updating the confirmatory delivery status information to indicate that the mail piece has been delivered, (col. 6, lines 36-40 discloses that upon return, label 49 is associated with label 251, and information on label 49 is scanned/stored in the database, and since delivery confirmation label 254 is affixed to the label 251 [or to label 49 upon a return], one can conclude that information on delivery confirmation label 254 is also scanned and stored in the database, meaning every time there is a return, the delivery confirmation is updated in the database when it is scanned).

Sansone does not specifically disclose processing the mail piece through a postal authority, but does disclose that the label of a Merchandise Return Label includes the name of the post office that issued the permit number for returning a package.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

processing the mail piece through a postal authority, (Col. 7, lines 40-42, shows postal authority). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the

purpose of showing that the postal authority is in charge of validating all postal information).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for confirmation delivery status information to be received for a postal authority for the purpose of showing that the postal authority has control over processing of postal transactions including delivery confirmation.

As per claim 15, Sansone discloses:

storing information...in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID, postage transaction date, and delivery status associated with the tracking ID, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual retuned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code, also, col. 4, lines 55-59 shows date included in the encrypted version of the unique number);

receiving a postage refund inquiry for the user account, (Col. 6,lines 20-24, buyer contact return processing);

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the postage refund inquiry, (Col. 6, lines 28-32, calculations are then made from the use data base, Sansone does not directly disclose "retrieving", however it is obvious that

Art Unit: 3639

this postal transaction information must be retrieved from the use data base in order to make appropriate calculations).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for a tracking ID to have an associated delivery status with the motivation of identifying what the status of tracked postage is, and to retrieve information from a database with the motivation of conducting further processing of information for the postage being tracked; and

refunding the postage for a first postage transaction only if the delivery status for the first postage transaction indicates that... and the postage transaction dates for the first and second Postage transactions are the same, (Col. 6, lines 42-47, matching).

Sansone does not specifically disclose the following, however does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

a plurality of postage transactions, (Abstract, lines 10-15, shows a database of information concerning user accounts [plural]);

associating the stored postage transaction information with a user account, (Col. 28, lines 21-23, general postal indicia based on a plurality of user accounts);

refunding... only if the delivery status for the first postage transaction indicates that... a mail piece associated with the tracking ID for the first postage transaction has not been delivered, (Col. 25, lines 5-18, shows that a process is carried out to ensure that the postal service would not issue a refund for a postage indicia that was previously used).

Whitehouse discloses the above limitations in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the a postal service can deal with a plurality of postage transactions for a plurality of user accounts, and does not issue refunds for postage indicia that was previously used.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to have a plurality of postage transactions and to associate the stored postage transactions with a user account, and not to refund a postage if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered/wherein the postage is not refunded with the motivation of not issuing a refund to a plurality of users for a plurality of postage transaction concerning delivered mail, and thus used postage.

As per claim 16, Sansone discloses:

wherein the information for each postage transaction comprises a destination zip code, service class and postage amount, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight);

wherein the postage is refunded only if the destination zip codes, service classes, and postage amounts for the first and second postage transactions are the same, (Col. 6, lines 42-47, match).

As per claims 17, 38, Sansone discloses:

receiving confirmatory delivery status information associated with the plurality of

tracking IDs/ receiving confirmatory delivery status information, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes); and updating the plurality of delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery status information/updating the delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery status information, (col. 6, lines 36-40 discloses that upon return, label 49 is associated with label 251, and information on label 49 is scanned/stored in the database, and since delivery confirmation label 254 is affixed to the label 251 [or to label 49 upon a return], one can conclude that information on delivery confirmation label 254 is also scanned and stored in the database, meaning every time there is a return, the delivery confirmation is updated in the database when it is scanned).

As per claims 19/20, Sansone discloses:

wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an account administrator, (Col. 6, lines 20-24, buyer contact return processing, shows both buyer and return processing is involved in the refund inquiry, where returns processing represents the account administrator and the buyer represents the end user);

As per claim 23, Sansone discloses:

storing information for...postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is

Art Unit: 3639

represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual returned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code, also, col. 4, lines 55-59 shows date included in the encrypted version of the unique number);

receiving confirmatory delivery status information from the postal authority, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes);

and

updating the plurality of delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery status information, (col. 6, lines 36-40 discloses that upon return, label 49 is associated with label 251, and information on label 49 is scanned/stored in the database, and since delivery confirmation label 254 is affixed to the label 251 [or to label 49 upon a return], one can conclude that information on delivery confirmation label 254 is also scanned and stored in the database, meaning every time there is a return, the delivery confirmation is updated in the database when it is scanned).

Sansone does not specifically disclose a plurality of postage transactions, however does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

a plurality of postage transactions, (Abstract, lines 10-15, shows a database of information concerning user accounts [plural]). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in

Art Unit: 3639

an analogous art for the purpose of showing that a postal service can handle transactions that a plurality of postal users make.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to have a plurality of postage transactions with the motivation of being able to process more than one transaction for a plurality of user accounts.

As per claim 24, Sansone does not specifically disclose associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts, but does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts, (Col. 28, lines 21-23, general postal indicia based on a plurality of user accounts). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that a postal service can handle transactions that a plurality of postal users make.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to associate the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts with the motivation of being able to process more than one transaction for a plurality of user accounts.

As per claim 25, Sansone discloses:

wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, (Col. 4, line 18, data included with the postal indicia).

As per claim 26, Sansone discloses:

wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight).

As per claim 30, Sansone does not specifically disclose e discloses:

Wherein the database management module is further configured for associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of accounts, but does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses.

Wherein the database management module is further configured for associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of accounts, (Col. 28, lines 21-23, general postal indicia based on a plurality of user accounts). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that a postal service can handle transactions that a plurality of postal users make.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to associate the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts with the motivation of being able to process more than one transaction for a plurality of user accounts.

As per claim 31, Sansone discloses:

wherein the information for each postage transaction information further comprises a postage transaction date, (Col. 4, line 18, data included with the postal indicia).

As per claim 32, Sansone discloses:

wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight).

As per claim 33, Sansone discloses:

storing information...in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual retuned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code, also, col. 4, lines 55-59 shows date included in the encrypted version of the unique number);

receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions, (Col. 9, lines 45-47, decision block determines if duplicate data exists);

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database, (Col. 9, line 51, one is finding duplicate postage transaction indicia in the database, therefore must retrieve this information first)

selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical, (Col. 9, lines 52-53, Col. 10, lines 19-21, transfers container to inspect bin); and

determining if any of the delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, (Col. 9, lines 35-53, after container for a postage transaction goes to an inspect bin, a determination is made as to whether read records containing delivery information matches and searches carrier [262] database).

Sansone does not specifically disclose the following, however does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

a plurality of postage transactions, (Abstract, lines 10-15, shows a database of information concerning user accounts [plural]);

associating the stored postage transaction information with a user account, (Col. 28, lines 21-23, general postal indicia based on a plurality of user accounts);

Whitehouse discloses the above limitations in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the a postal service can deal with a plurality of postage transactions for a plurality of user accounts, and does not issue refunds for postage indicia that was previously used.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to have a plurality of postage transactions and to associate the stored postage transactions with a user account, and not to refund a postage if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has

been delivered/wherein the postage is not refunded with the motivation of not issuing a refund to a plurality of users for a plurality of postage transaction concerning delivered mail, and thus used postage.

As per claims 35, 43, 45, Sansone does not specifically disclose determining that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered/ wherein the filtering module is further configured for determining that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, but however does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses: determining that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered/ wherein the filtering module is further configured for determining that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, (Col. 245, lines 5-13, checking database to see if postage indicia was unused). Whitehouse discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of determining if postage indicia has been used or not.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to determine that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered/ wherein the filtering module is further configured for determining that issued

postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered with the motivation of determining whether or not to issue a refund based on delivery status.

As per claim 36, Sansone discloses:

 further comprising displaying the postage transaction information for the selected postage transactions, (Col. 7, lines 38-44, display results of postage calculations).

As per claim 37, Sansone discloses:

 wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight).

As per claims 40, 41, Sansone discloses:

 wherein the duplicative postage transaction inquiry is received from an account administrator, (Col. 6, lines 20-24, buyer contact return processing, shows both buyer and return processing is involved in the refund inquiry, where returns processing represents the account administrator and the buyer represents the end user).

As per claim 44, Sansone discloses:

 a database, (Col. 5, lines 55-58, data base);
 a communications module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes); and

a database management module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, (Col. 6, lines 28-33, calculates postage required and enters the appropriate information in label 251 [which includes the unique code used to track the goods], here, this information is then stored in actual returned orders data base. Since the tracking ID is represented by the unique code, and since this unique code is stored in the actual retuned orders data base, it is obvious that the delivery status is "returned" for the postage with that particular unique code, also, col. 4, lines 55-59 shows date included in the encrypted version of the unique number).

...when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical, and determining if any of the delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, (Col. 9, lines 52-53, Col. 10, lines 19-21, transfers container to inspect bin, w/Col. 9, lines 35-53, after container for a postage transaction goes to an inspect bin, a determination is made as to whether read records containing delivery information matches and searches carrier [262] database).

Sansone does not specifically disclose data processing circuitry, a communications module, a database management module, or a filtering module, but these features are inherent with Sansone since Sansone does disclose a computer

Art Unit: 3639

environment in col. 5, lines 41-43, therefore making it obvious to include data processing circuitry, a communications module and a database management module.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to include data processing circuitry, a communications module, a database management module, or a filtering module, with the motivation of incorporating hardware and software that is commonly included and necessary in a computing environment that handles processing of information, communicating information and utilizing databases in the environment.

Sansone does not specifically disclose the database management module further configured for associating the postage transaction information with a user account, but does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Whitehouse discloses:

the database management module further configured for associating the postage transaction information with a user account, (Col. 28, lines 21-23, general postal indicia based on a plurality of user accounts);

Whitehouse discloses the above limitations in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the a postal service can deal with postage transactions for a user account.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for the database management module further configured for associating the postage transaction information with a user account with the motivation associating a user trying to complete a postage transaction with a specific account.

As per claim 46, Sansone discloses:

wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount, (Col. 4, lines 49-59, dollar amount, date, zip code, class of mail, data and time, weight).

As per claim 47, Sansone discloses:

wherein the communications module is further configured for receiving confirmatory delivery status information, and the database management module is further configured for updating the delivery statuses with the confirmatory delivery status information, (Col. 5, lines 32-33, and Fig 3B shows that delivery confirmation 254 is affixed to label 251 on the package [where label 251 contains the unique code used for tracking purposes, col. 6, lines 36-40 discloses that upon return, label 49 is associated with label 251, and information on label 49 is scanned/stored in the database, and since delivery confirmation label 254 is affixed to the label 251 [or to label 49 upon a return], one can conclude that information on delivery confirmation label 254 is also scanned and stored in the database, meaning every time there is a return, the delivery confirmation is updated in the database when it is scanned]).

6. Claim 29 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sansone (US 6,547,136), and further in view of Sansone et al (US 5,008,827).

As per claim 29, Sansone fails to disclose the following, however does disclose a system for issuing a refund for returned items in col. 10, line 61.

However, Sansone et al discloses:

a delivery status request module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for generating a request for the confirmatory delivery status

information, wherein the communications module is further configured for transmitting the request to the master tracking computer system, (col. 22, line 66-col. 23, line 14, system for tracking an article including means responsive to a tracking request identifying delivery stage through a user interface). Sansone et al discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that a delivery stage can be identified in a delivery system.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to have a delivery status request module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for generating a request for the confirmatory delivery status information, wherein the communications module is further configured for transmitting the request to the master tracking computer system with the motivation of showing that the delivery status for a package can be obtained through a computer system.

Conclusion

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Akiba K Robinson-Boyce whose telephone number is 571-272-6734. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on 571-272-6708. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-746-7238 [After final communications, labeled "Box AF"], 703-746-7239 [Official Communications], and 703-746-7150 [Informal/Draft Communications, labeled "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"].

Art Unit: 3639

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-305-3900.



A. R. B.
December 6, 2005